

MODERATOR – David Gray

Ron

Good Afternoon –

My name is Ron Curry. I was appointed Regional Administrator on September 24, 2012 by President Obama.

Today – I am joined by several EPA colleagues - that many of you may know – including both Sam Coleman, my deputy and Carl Edlund, Director of the Superfund program. We also have the project team with us.

This morning – EPA made an important announcement about our plans to reduce long-term risk posed by contamination found at the San Jacinto River Waste Pits Superfund site in Harris County – just outside Houston, Texas.

One of the first environmental and public health challenges that came to my attention after becoming Regional Administrator for EPA Region 6 (Texas, Arkansas, Oklahoma, Louisiana and New Mexico) was San Jacinto Waste Pits (Oct 16, 2012 meeting) and it has continued to this day.

I knew immediately that it was going to be a big challenge and needed to be a priority during my tenure as Regional Administrator.

Within my first six months on the job – I traveled to Houston to see firsthand the complexities faced in cleaning up the site (February 26, 2013). I remember the first time walking out on the area North of I-10 and seeing the temporary cap partially submerged under the San Jacinto River – and thinking to myself, how are we going to clean up this place so that the people and environment are protected over the long-term, say 30 or 50 years?

Fast forward to today – after countless meetings, tours, talks, letters, and studies – EPA released its preferred cleanup plan for this Superfund site.

Before I continue – I want to acknowledge the work of the potential responsible parties in taking temporary action to reduce contaminants from migrating off-site since 2009 and gathering information about the site conditions. I know that the temporary armored cap on the north side of I-10 has had some problems from its design to maintenance and repairs – but the PRPs have been responsive to our directives and follow up to deficiencies found by our dive team's inspections. I know that they did this work under an EPA order – but I still think it's important that we acknowledge their work at the site while a long-term plan was being developed.

Back to today's announcement – EPA is proposing to remove contaminated material that exceeds our health-based cleanup level of above 200 nanograms per kilogram from North and above 240 nanograms per kilogram from South sides of I-10. One area, north of I-10, known as the Sand Separation Area is below our cleanup level and isn't being proposed for removal. Combined – we expect to remove an estimated 202,000 cubic yards of contaminated material at an estimated cost of nearly \$97 million.

We know that removing the contaminated material abandoned and left behind by former businesses is a big job and has to be done cautiously. I've talked to some downstream stakeholders and we will do



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everything to remove the threat posed by the site both locally as well as downstream to the Galveston Bay and beyond.

We believe that this plan is the most protective plan – for both the communities and the ecosystem - and makes more sense than replacing the current temporary cap with something stronger that has to be maintained far into the future.

We know that some people will not agree with all or part of our preferred plan. Feedback and ideas are not only important to us – they are critical to our success. The plan is a proposal – and we are inviting comment over the next 60 days, until November 28. Our proposal and the entire administrative record – that’s nearly 900 documents that we relied on - are available for review, both online and at the Highlands Library.

It is important to hear from everyone – and we have tried to make it easy. You can comment by filing out an online form, emailing your comments or mailing your comments to us.

We will also hold a public meeting at the Highland Community Center on Oct. 20 and have a court reporter on-hand to capture comments presented at the meeting.

In wrapping up – it will take a while for EPA to review and consider all of the comments - and completes the final plan. We will carefully review and consider all of the comments – to decide if our plan for the long-term protection of people and the environment needs to be adjusted in any way.

All the time that we are working on the long-term plan – we will continue to inspect and monitoring conditions at the site and direct the PRPs to take any action necessary to ensure the temporary measure continue to prevent off-site migration of contamination – until the long-term remedy is in place.

Now I will ask Sam and Carl to say a few words.

Sam

FOCUS ON COMMUNITY MEETINGS

I am Sam Coleman, deputy regional administrator for Region 6.

I’d add one note. As RA Curry mentioned – we have worked hard to keep everyone updated on the site and our plans. I have personally attended several of the Community meetings to hear from the local community.

For the past 6 years – we have been working with the 16 member Community Awareness Committee for the project – which includes citizens, community organizers, local elected officials and companies. The CAC meets on a regular basis and help us with information sharing. We will continue to work with the CAC as well as federal, state and local officials - to share information about the project and gather feedback from nearby residents.

As Ron mentioned, we will host a community meeting at Highlands Community Center on Oct 20 to gather input on our proposed plan – and a copy of the entire administrative record will be available at

the Highlands library. Community input is critical to our success and we encourage everyone to participate.

Now I will invite Carl to say a few words.

Carl

FOCUS ON ALTERNATIVES THAT WERE CONSIDERED IN THE PROPOSED PLAN

I am Carl Edlund. I am director of the Superfund Division at EPA in Dallas.

I'd mention that the Proposed Plan also includes information on a couple of alternatives that we considered. When you read it – you will see that we considered options for leaving some or all of the material in place and using institution controls to prevent contaminated materials from migrating.

Consideration of alternatives is an important part of our decision making process and we did just that – look at other ways of cleaning up the site. You will see alternatives summarized in the proposed plan and over 900 documents included in the administrative record (many that also discuss various options).

Both of these are available for public review during the 60 day public comment period (that closes, November 28).

Ultimately – we decided that removal of contaminated material was the most protective for people and the environment – and, this became our Preferred Remedy that we announced today.

We expect lots of comments on our plan. We will carefully review suggestions and ideas as we develop the final cleanup plan for the site.

Thank you.

TURN BACK OVER TO DAVID